

From the Top



/ARFCCommander

As I reflect on my first year as your chief and commander, I have to admit I am still overwhelmed by the honor and humbled by the privilege to serve you and your families. I wake up every morning in awe of your commitment to your families and this country! I am grateful to be able to serve beside the best Airmen in the world.

This first year has been marked by some Air Force Reserve "firsts" in our history. Airmen from the 908th Airlift Wing planned and executed the first-ever Reserve Partnership Program visit to Romania. The 419th Fighter Wing was the Air Force Reserve's first unit to reach operational capability in the F-35 Lightening II. We saw exciting advancements in our fleet such as the 413th Flight Test Group's 514th Flight Test Squadron historic flight of the first A-10 Thunderbolt modified for weather observation

And although not firsts, as always our Reserve Citizen Airmen stood ready to protect our homeland, extinguishing 16 raging wildfires utilizing more than 1.3 million pounds of retardant, spraying more than 191,000 acres with 79,000 gallons of pesticide to control disease and vegetation proliferation, and flying 135 hurricane missions with approximately 1,000 hours monitoring weather conditions for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

We also culminated 26 years of continuous operational support to combatant commands around the globe.

The Reserve Force Generation Center developed cutting-edge tracking tools for Reserve leaders to maintain visibility of our 6,000 members who, daily, are on active-duty orders supporting overseas and stateside operations.

Reserve Citizen Airmen performed more than 4.4 million man-days and filled more than 3,200 air expeditionary force taskings providing global vigilance, global reach and global power.

Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance analysts contributed more than 240,000 combat support hours and provided critical imagery to aid several humanitarian missions. Our

space professionals supported worldwide operations across the spectrum, ranging from tracking and providing warnings for 28 storms to tracking more than 23,000 objects in orbit and answering more than 3,400 support requests.

More than 4,000 total force cyber operators engaged in combatant and major commands. Reserve Citizen Airmen flew more than 7,000 sorties and 32,000 hours delivering more than 36,000 passengers, and more than 34,000 tons of cargo around the globe.

Our fighters, bombers and remotely piloted aircraft conducted combat and theater security operations around the world daily supporting our joint and coalition partners. Remotely piloted aircraft flew more than 17,000 sorties across four Reserve squadrons; fighters and bombers flew more than 1,900 sorties and more than 6,000 hours supporting combat forces employing more than 100,000 pounds of ordnance. To say we are engaged is an understatement!

As we reflect on the past year, we must remember our Airmen who we have lost. We must keep them and their families in our thoughts. We must remain firmly focused on readiness, stay aligned with Air Force priorities, and approach our future with the lens of preserving, building and shaping our Air Force Reserve.

As we continue to integrate with Air Force and joint partners, we must ensure we enable success in the full spectrum of conflict, whenever and wherever we are needed. Thank you for remaining an integrated, flexible and combat-ready force as we deliver a diverse capability to ensure our nation's defense. Your efforts provide critical capabilities to our joint partners and continued support to national security. Thank you for holding dear your service to this great nation and to your families.

(Editor's note: You can access the Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command historian's Air Force Reserve 2016 Year in Review online at http://www.afrc.af.mil/Portals/87/documents/AFR-YIR-2016.pdf?ver=2017-04-28-124554-870.)

Maryanne Metter

MARYANNE MILLER Lieutenant General Commander, Air Force Reserve Command



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Leadership Staff

Gen. David L. Goldfein

Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

Lt. Gen. Maryanne Miller *Commander,* Air Force Reserve Command

Col. Bruce M. Bender

Director of Public Affairs, Air Force Reserve Command

Magazine Staff

Cliff Tyler

Editor, Public Affairs, Air Force Reserve Command

Bo Joyner

Managing Editor, Public Affairs, Air Force Reserve Command

Tyler Grimes

Staff Writer, Public Affairs, Air Force Reserve Command

Adam Butterick

Graphic Designer, Multimedia, Air Force Reserve Command

Contributing Writers

Col. Beth Kelly Horine// D-Day Celebration

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Chief's View



Reflecting on my first year as the command chief and the newly named senior enlisted advisor to the chief of the Air Force Reserve, I feel honored to represent the more than 56,000 Reserve enlisted Airmen who continue to support global operations The Air Force Reserve could not accomplish the mission without you.

I want to share some highlights of the past year and the many positive changes within the Air Force Reserve.

Last year, I set a goal to do three things: preserve our heritage, develop and build Airmen, and shape future enlisted leaders. It is hard to change a culture. My desire, instead, was to mold it – making it a transparent environment for all enlisted members My hope was to ensure all enlisted are aware of the many opportunities available for them to grow in their careers. My intent was to build relationships, clearly communicate and be accessible to our enlisted Airmen.

Our heritage, as Reservists, means our strategic forces are ready at any given moment for the next no-notice call-up. I have briefed at congressional hearings, gene officer forums, state of the Air I briefings, and major command-level conferences as your enlist representative, sharing with na and civic leaders the dedication enlisted members to remain rea at all times under heavy operat demands.

You have done a phenomenal job as we ask you to do this wit shrinking and unpredictable bu You always impress! As we grow space, cyber, and ISR (intelliger surveillance and reconnaissance essential for us to stay relevant Air Force.

We will continue to align our growth with active-duty Air For requirements. You are all part c progress.

Developing and building our Airmen is critical to the growth the Air Force Reserve. I have be privileged to serve on 18 enliste developmental boards and eight panels. I've visited 10 Reserve t and all three Reserve numbered forces.

These events gave me the opportunity to get to know you on a more personal level, allowing me to gain meaningful feedback from the field.

I was also able to share the many opportunities available to our Airmen, such as applying for the educational and developmental boards, the Stripes for Excellence Program, and the new Command Chief Screening Board process. I will continue to look for ways to build and develop the enlisted force. Much of my effort has been to shape our Reserve enlisted members into leaders for tomorrow's Air Force Reserve.

One of the most rewarding things for me has been attending seven Yellow Ribbon events. I connected with and encouraged Airmen, their parents, spouses, children, siblings and relatives. I spent time with the people who worried about, "Are we going to be OK? Is my deployed spouse/child/sibling going to be OK?" I was able to build relationships with Airmen and their families. These relationships ultimately shape our enlisted as we lead by example.

Last year, I promised to concentrate on mentoring and giving Airmen an understanding of their part in the overall mission. One of my continuing top priorities is to empower the enlisted force and give them opportunities and options to further develop as leaders.





CITIZEN AIRMAN

The Official Magazine of the Air Force Reserve

Pilot Shortage
Reserve, airlines fishing in the same pond

Aerial Refueling

Reservices critical to success of advisory from

At the Forefront

20 Stripes to Stars

25 Mobile Mission Kit

26 D-Day Celebration

Engineer builds bridges -- literally and figuratively



ON THE COVER

Cover: Tech. In the wake of an ongoing Air Force-wide pilot shortage, the Air Force Reserve is working hard to overcome this obstacle and continue the flying missions it is uniquely suited for. For more on what the Reserve is doing to attract and retain more pilots, see the story on page 6. (Illustration by Adam Butterick)

Solving the Pilot Shortage

Air Force Reserve, airlines fishing in the same pond By Tyler Grimes



The Air Force Reserve has 290 pilot vacancies across the command. The Air Force has a shortage of more than 1,500 pilots across the total force.

In the wake of the ongoing Air Force-wide pilot shortage, the Air Force Reserve and its units are trying their best to overcome this obstacle and continue the flying missions they are uniquely suited for both today and tomorrow.

As of February, the Air Force has a shortage of more than 1,500 pilots across the total force. The data also suggests that the shortage is having the greatest impact on the fighter community.

One of the Reservists actively involved in dealing with the pilot shortage issue is Col. Mike LoForti, former Air Force Reserve Command Combat Operations Division chief and current 920th Rescue Wing Operations Group commander at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. LoForti said with commercial airlines stepping up their hiring efforts, the continuing budgetary constraints, and the high operations tempo, many Reserve Citizen Airmen are converting from full-time air reserve technician and active Guard and Reserve to traditional Reservist status.

"As a result, AFRC's overall pilot numbers haven't changed dramatically due to this shift," he said. "However, the full-time manning now has 290 pilot vacancies across the command. This issue will continue to grow given the major airlines are projected to hire over 4,000 pilots a year for at least the next 10 years due to the fact that a large number of pilots hired in the 1990s are reaching mandatory retirement age imposed by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration)."

To meet this challenge, LoForti's former Headquarters division along with Doug Miller from the Rated Management Division are implementing several initiatives to recruit and retain pilots across AFRC.

One initiative involves transitioning some vacant ART positions into AGR positions, as the AGR positions provide more pay equity and flexibility for pilots in commercial aviation. Currently, the manning rate for ART pilots is about 67 percent, while the AGR pilot manning rate remains above 90 percent. In addition, many new pilots prefer AGR status positions, LoForti said.

"Also, pilots who transition to airlines can return to an AGR full-time status on military leave up to five years after finishing a probationary period with their respective airlines. However, they are ineligible to take this leave for ART positions, with a vast majority of airlines," he said.

AFRC is also working to educate more Citizen Airmen about the ART recruitment, relocation, and retention program and the incentives available to qualifying Reservists.

"For years, eligible AGR pilots received bonuses of up to \$25,000 per year. However, far fewer ART pilots were qualifying for similar incentives until very recently," LoForti said. "The request for ART retention incentives has increased dramatically in the past year, but the process is laborious, compared to applying for an AGR bonus. Therefore, the command is looking at ways to streamline or simplify the process for commanders."

In addition to streamlining incentives, the command is attempting to minimize the length of time it takes to hire ARTs. The hiring process usually takes at least 120 days to complete but, in many cases, can take significantly longer. This time-intensive process can make it difficult to recruit pilots who are in high demand throughout the aviation industry.

"AFRC is competing for a very small pool of experienced pilot candidates. Therefore, we must streamline our processes if we are to compete with the Air National Guard, active duty, or the airlines," he said. "Many candidates will not wait a significant amount of time when there are other opportunities of the significant shortages in the maintenance and enlisted elsewhere."

As commander of the 476th Fighter Group at Moody AFB, Georgia, Col. Michael "Angry" Schultz sees first-hand that the high demand for pilots is a major issue and one that makes things even harder for the pilots who choose to stay in the Air

"The pilots who stay are carrying more weight because the demand for them doesn't change just because there are fewer of them to go around," Schultz said.

For his part, Schultz is finding a way forward by helping interested enlisted Reserve Citizen Airmen take steps to become pilots.

"We recently interviewed enlisted candidates from our own unit and hired two young pilots," he said. "There are success stories here at the 476th of hiring from within. We actively seek potential pilots from within our existing enlisted ranks and train our own."

Lt. Gen. Maryanne Miller, AFRC commander, said in an interview with Federal News Radio in March that the pilot shortage is a central personnel issue the command is facing.

"With respect to our personnel readiness challenges, I am focused on three main areas: the first being the pilot shortage; the second the shortfalls in full-time support; and, finally, critical skills manning," Miller said.

Miller went on to say that when it comes to the pilot shortage, the most challenging part isn't attracting pilots, it's keeping them. She explained that AFRC as a whole is able to bring on a sufficient number of new pilots, but retaining them for the long term continues to be very problematic.

Lt. Col. Todd Halverson, branch chief of AFRC Rated Management and Full-time Support Working Group deputy chairman, has been working on the issues involving the pilot shortage for the past few years and has been working with AFRC leadership on possible solutions.

"We built a pilot survey, which went out in the summer of last year," Halverson said. "That survey gave us the qualitative and quantitative data we needed to attack some of the

The two major issues the results of the survey identified were payment matters and administrative workload. Many Reserve pilots face unique challenges because of their dual military and civilian statuses involving pay differences,

medical benefits, travel orders, training requirements, and

Halverson and his team are developing initiatives to try to close the pilot pay gap between the Reserve and the commercial airlines.

"We really focus on the retention piece and trying to streamline the process by which pilots across the command can get a retention incentive to potentially stop them from leaving," he said. "That's still ongoing, and we've had some

Halverson said the pilot shortage is made worse because aviation fields.

"Maintenance and ops go hand in hand," he said. "If you can't fix them, then there is nothing to fly."

On the pilot side, Halverson is part of the pilot training boards that work to bring new pilots into the Reserve. The boards, which have previously convened twice per year, are now scheduled to meet six times per year, starting this September, to try to bring on more pilots faster than before.

Another initiative now underway involves bringing Air Force ROTC students directly into pilot training upon their commissioning. The ROTC board will meet once a year in October to look at students in their junior year who are interested in joining the Reserve as pilots.

Even though the pilot shortage is hitting the fighter units the hardest, LoForti said the mobility air forces are now feeling the effects of the same shortfalls.

Lt. Col. Michael Vinson, 79th Air Refueling Squadron chief pilot at Travis AFB, California, said the pilot shortage is partly

"With the stress of ops tempo, this has dropped off our radars," Vinson said. "I've heard senior officers say morale is not the problem, readiness is. While I agree with the readiness piece, I take extreme issue with the approach to morale. Morale is fundamentally the cornerstone of dignity, respect, and understanding. My daily mantra is, 'Let's remember who's doing who a favor around here."

In addition to being a morale issue, LoForti said the pilot shortage has been a long-term issue.

"The problem can be traced back over a decade ago when we started under-producing pilots after the last two rounds of the defense base closure and realignment actions," LoForti said.

But there are success stories. Lt. Col. John Robinson, 315th Airlift Wing Operations Group deputy commander at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, explained that his unit is bucking the pilot shortage trend with 100 percent manning. Robinson attributes the unit's strong manning numbers to personnel planning.

"We are proactive and plan for losses and retirements and hire based on those projections," Robinson said. "I think we are better off than most units because of the age of most of our ARTs. We have a great location, a great mission, a great aircraft, and three active-duty squadrons here with us."







Robinson said that a major factor for the Air Force-wide pilot shortage is the competition from the commercial airlines.

"Air Force can't compete with airlines with respect to money," he said. "The military must work to reduce the issues that face people who work here on a daily basis."

In May, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein hosted a national pilot sourcing meeting with airline industry executives to discuss how the Air Force can work together with the commercial aviation sector to address the pilot shortage.

"Today's aviation enterprise doesn't adequately meet the needs for national defense and national commerce," Goldfein said. "This is the beginning of something I think will have big payoffs, if we're disciplined in the way we approach it."

Miller echoed the need to collaborate with the airlines in a statement saying, "We're not going to fix the numbers anytime soon, so we have to get after how we use those pilots in both uniforms."

In her testimony before the House Appropriations Committee on the National Guard and Reserve in May, Miller explained how the fiscal year 2018 budget proposal will affect the Air Force Reserve and the pilot shortage.

"The fiscal year 2018 president's budget request continues our efforts to build readiness and capability by

adding 800 positions across our rated, space, cyber, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions," Miller said. "The budget request, with additional overseas contingency operations support, begins to fund weapon system sustainment closer to required levels, ensuring we can produce the exercise, training, and combat sorties needed to sustain the best Air Force in the world."

In June, the Air Force announced changes to the aviation bonus program, including increasing the maximum bonus amount from \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year. The program also provides more flexibility with more contract options based on the various airframes.

(Editor's Note: In a recent episode of "Airmen's Moments," Air Force Reserve Vice Commander Maj. Gen. William Waldrop, now retired, and 1st. Lt. Jordan Echols from the 476th Fighter Group at Moody AFB, Georgia discussed the pilot retention issue, the enlisted to officer path and the need for more Reserve Citizen Airman pilots. Check out the video at http://www.afrc.af.mil/News/Video/videoid/514557/#DVIDSVideoPlayer12600.)



The Aerial Refueling Systems Advisory Group is a team of military and industry representatives from 20 nations with a mission of advancing aerial refueling around the world. Here, a 916th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker extends its boom to refuel a 4th Fighter Wing F-15E Strike Eagle. Both wings are assigned to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. (Master Sgt. Wendy Lopedote)





A plane flown by Capt. Lowell H. Smith and Lt. John P. Richter receives fuel from a plane flown by1st Lt. Virgil Hine and 1st Lt. Frank W. Seifert during one of the first recorded aerial refuelings. ARSAG has been working to improve aerial refueling for nearly 40 years.



(Editor's note: Air Force Reserve Command and Air Mobility Command have enjoyed a close working relationship since 1968. Following is one of a series of stories designed to focus on current successful AFRC/AMC partnerships and how the commands are planning to maintain and expand that relationship into the future. Previous partnership stories can be found in the December and February issues, which are available online at http://www.citamn.afrc.af.mil/Past-Issues/.)

With the ongoing mission to utilize Air Force resources more effectively and to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, Air Mobility Command's Fuel Efficiency Division is tasked with finding innovative ways to enhance mission effectiveness through saving fuel and money. Citizen Airmen have been at the forefront of this important effort since the Fuel Efficiency Office's inception in 2008.

Originally manned with two officers — both commercial airline pilots — from Air Force Reserve Command and two contractors, the office was responsible for putting programs in place to achieve the secretary of the Air Force-directed goal of a 10 percent fuel consumption reduction by the end of 2015.

"In 2008 and 2009, fuel prices had spiked significantly to more than double and accounted for a significant portion of the Air Force budget," said Lt. Col. Vince Zabala, Fuel Efficiency Division program manager. "Because of this, it was imperative to increase fuel efficiency across the mobility air forces."

As the need for fuel efficiency increased, so did the size of the office and the number of Reservists supporting the mission. The mission is especially important given the fact that AMC today accounts for more than 50 percent of the total aviation fuel costs for the entire Air Force.

"Many of these Reservists were also airline pilots, who were able to infuse many of their commercially proven fuel-saving initiatives into AMC operations," Zabala said. "Additionally, AMC was able to convince the Air Force that, by providing small measures of seed money, fuel efficiency programs could harvest definitive savings back to both the command and the Air Force."

That investment paid off in April 2013 when the Air Force reached its goal of achieving a 10 percent fuel consumption reduction, more than two years ahead of schedule. With the fuel consumption goal achieved, a new goal was established to increase fuel efficiency by 10 percent by 2020.

To meet the new objective, the Fuel Efficiency Division began to research ways to leverage various concepts, such as changes to policies, procedures, planning and maintenance practices; aircraft material changes; and science and technology advances.

One significant initiative the division fielded is the KC-135 Stratotanker Engine Compressor Upgrade Program, which improves engine longevity and efficiency by saving fuel and sustainment costs.

Another development is the Air Refueling Liaison Office, which started in 2010. The ARLO uses tankers already airborne to fill refueling requests, rather than launching a sortie specifically to fill the request. Over the years, the office has become a normalized process in mobility air forces operations, with approximately \$28.6 million in extra fuel costs avoided since its inception.

The division also played a supporting role in the development and operationalization of the Mobility Air Forces Cost Avoidance Tankering concept. The MAFCAT process not only helps the Department of Defense avoid overall costs, but it also helps save lives in the combat zone.

"That program avoided spending approximately \$20 million in DOD enterprise dollars and potentially saved more than two dozen lives in the (area of responsibility) by tankering fuel from less expensive locations to avoid refueling at expensive locations," Zabala said. "While this requires MAF aircraft to carry more fuel than needed for each specific mission and generates an additional cost to carry the extra gas, it removes dangerous fuel convoys that would be needed to supply those expensive locations in U.S. Central Command and saves the overall DOD enterprise more dollars than that used to tanker the gas."

Much of the success of the division is attributed to the strong collaboration between AFRC and AMC and the major role Citizen Airmen play in the MAF mission.

"A significant portion of the mobility air forces resides in the Air Force Reserve, and teamwork between active-duty and reserve components will ensure continued efficient operations that can save precious resources, while improving operational capability," Zabala said. "Specifically, our Reservists are the fuel efficiency analysts and program managers in charge of delivering actionable results to improve MAF fuel efficiency, and AMC leads the way for the Air Force."

Reservists manage fuel efficiency programs currently under development like Surfing Aircraft Vortices for Energy. The program, developed by Air Force Research Laboratory and Boeing, uses updated software on the C-17 Globemaster III to fly just outside the lead aircraft's wake vortices, thus taking advantage of the lift generated.

Research into these types of programs has paid great dividends. As of fiscal year 2015, it is estimated that 11.2 million gallons of fuel have been saved due to the practices and innovations developed by the Fuel Efficiency Division, and that reduction equates to approximately \$300,000 saved every day.

Recently AMC, U.S. Transportation Command, the Defense Logistics Agency and the Tanker Airlift Control Center have worked together to standardize the process and expand MAFCAT to worldwide operations.

"Those results showed tremendous potential to save the DOD additional millions of dollars annually, while, at the same time, the automated computation method actually decreased the workload," Zabala said.

If trends continue, DOD's annual fuel cost savings could potentially amount to approximately \$50 million as MAFCAT is normalized globally.



An F-15C Eagle assigned to the 104th Fighter Wing, Barnes Air National Guard Base, Mass., is refueled by a KC-135 Stratotanker assigned to the 916th Air Refueling Wing, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C. (Master Sgt. Kevin Nichols)



Tech. Sgt. Richard Costaflis, a 940th Air Refueling Wing boom operator from Beale Air Force Base, California, refuels a C-5 Galaxy from Travis Air Force Base, California, over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. (Airman Tristan D. Viglianco)





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If trends continue, DOD's annual fuel cost savings could potentially amount to approximately \$50 million as MAFCAT is normalized globally.

FROM STRIPES TO STARS

AFTER 41 YEARS, CITIZEN AIRMAN COMPLETES HIS JOURNEY BY TYLER GRIMES

As a 17-year-old high school sophomore, Udo McGregor knew he wanted to enlist in the military. In fact, he planned to attend summer school in Savannah, Georgia, so he could graduate a year early and begin his journey. His father, a soldier stationed at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah and multi-tour Vietnam veteran, had some very specific words of advice.

"Son, don't join the Army."

Following his father's guidance, McGregor, who, as a brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve, is scheduled to retire Sept. 1 after 41 years in the service, looked into what the Air Force had to offer. At the time, in 1976, against the backdrop of the post-Vietnam War era, he explained he faced a very different environment than service members do today.

"People really didn't celebrate the military," said the vice commander of the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia. "They couldn't separate the policies from the people who served. Returning Vietnam veterans weren't welcomed home at airports like we are now, and serving military members slicked their hair down to be less conspicuous downtown."

But that challenge did not deter him from striving to reach his goal.

As a military "brat," McGregor knew the Air Force would give him the opportunity to travel far from home and see the world. However, after completing basic training in San Antonio and technical school in Wichita Falls, Texas, the newly minted airman basic, the oldest of five children, was sent all the way to Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, only about 100 miles from where he joined up.

"It's an old military truth that the assignment detailers have a sense of humor and only send you to the one place you didn't ask for," McGregor said.

The active-duty Air Force, and especially the helicopter maintenance section where he was first assigned, gave the general the opportunity and structure he was looking for, but the experience gave him a lot more.

"It was all the leadership and mentorship you could ever want," he said. "Small unit dynamics, we all knew each other at work and socially. Even as a two-striper, my experience was that my tech sergeants and master sergeants challenged us to go do the work and then trusted us to get it done."

That ability to handle responsibility and build a team was something that Mark Field, McGregor's roommate and a fellow maintainer at Shaw AFB, saw in him early on.

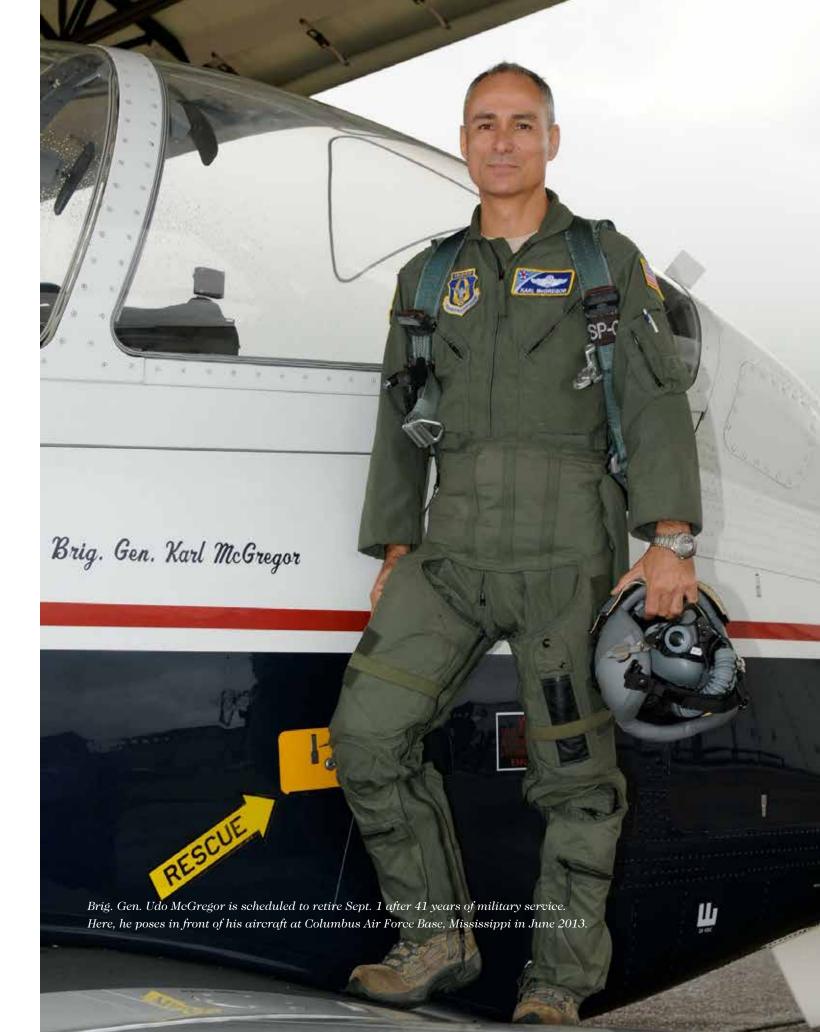
"He was an (airman first class), and I was an airman," Field said. "He cares about people. He goes out of his way to check to make sure his people are OK."

In 1978, opportunity knocked, and McGregor was chosen to join the helicopter flight squadron as a flight engineer.

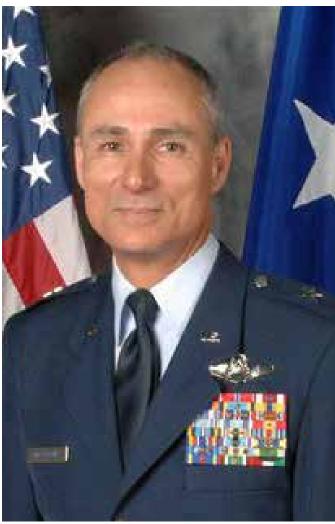
"Where else can a 20-year-old hang out the side of a helicopter during a low-level flight, fire a machine gun and direct hoist operations for rescue missions, all while wearing a flight suit, leather jacket and cool sunglasses," McGregor said.

Though he'd been pursuing college classes at night during his time on active duty, in 1980 McGregor switched to the Air Force Reserve in an attempt to focus on his education full time. As a Reservist, he retrained to be a flight engineer on the C-141 Starlifter while stationed at Charleston AFB, South Carolina.

"I had planned on going to school pretty much full time, but there was a shortage of flight engineers, so I ended up flying the world for two years," McGregor said. "My roommate in Charleston was Tech. Sgt. Archie Frye (who later would become a colonel). The two of us living in the same apartment, surrounded by other single apartment dwellers, was a mistake that lasted for two years. Archie was the first to realize neither of us was going to finish school if we stayed there. In fact, the flight surgeon told him he was going to die if he didn't start sleeping, so he departed for school in







The general has seen a lot of changes in the Air Force since he entered basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas in August 1976.

Louisiana. And after two years of missions in South America, the Pacific theater and across Europe, I left for San Antonio."

The Reserve gave McGregor the opportunity to switch aircraft platforms once again — from the C-141 to the C-130B Hercules — out of Kelly AFB, Texas, which was much more conducive to his status as a full-time student.

"I really wasn't working toward a commission; I was really working toward a degree," he said.

A few years later, his unit converted aircraft from the C-130B to the C-5 Galaxy. This change caused some of the senior officers to retire rather than retrain, which also provided McGregor the opportunity to earn an officer commission.

"There was a shortage of pilots," he said. "I had just finished at the University of Texas in San Antonio, and I was asked to submit a package. I was thrilled."

McGregor completed Officer Training School as the first honor graduate in 1985, then received his fighter, attack and reconnaissance rating from undergraduate pilot training at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio, Texas. After nine years of enlisted service and seven years as a flight engineer, he felt ready to

22

take on the task of joining the officer and pilot ranks. Within two years he had upgraded to instructor pilot, being only the second first lieutenant to achieve that distinction on the extremely complicated C-5.

In 1990, McGregor, along with other members of his squadron, was activated in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

"The flying was rewarding as the logistics system kicked into high gear, delivering everything needed to build up and sustain bases in the Middle East," he said. "I flew helicopters out of Pope AFB (in North Carolina) on day one of Desert Shield. That's how fast the mobilization process worked. All the training paid off as well, as we air refueled and worked aircraft into some pretty remote locations."

The Desert Storm experience allowed McGregor to see the seamless nature of operations among active-duty members, Reservists and Air National Guardsmen.

"The mix is good," he said. "In the theater, you can't tell who's Reserve, Guard or active duty. There's really no difference in job performance."

Although it's difficult to tell the difference between people

in the three components, the general said in many cases Reservists bring more experience to the missions downrange.

"They take the discussion from tactical to a higher level," he said. "They tend to be more senior people who understand organizational structure in a broader sense. They tend to work with a lot less supervision."

After deactivation, McGregor moved to the operations group.

"That was life altering for me," he said. "I was deeply vested in squadron life and didn't believe there was anything worth doing at a higher level. But it wasn't long before I was briefing the group and wing commander and, as a captain, getting unsolicited career advice from them."

He said, though, that the best advice he ever received came from Lt. Col. Henry Huggins, the command post chief, who told him, "If you work hard and do good work, you don't have to worry about anything else, because everything else will take care of itself."

Over the following years McGregor deployed to the Middle East three times. During his deployments, he brought his expertise and commitment to the mission and his Airmen to truly make a difference, said Col. Kevin Gordon, 15th Wing commander at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, who was McGregor's deputy director of mobility forces for the Central Command in 2015.

"It was a fantastic experience, and I witnessed his determination to support the warfighter while striving to improve both effectiveness and efficiency," Gordon said. "He championed a tanker relocation effort that saved money, time and resources and better supported the fight. It was a huge accomplishment that would not have happened if not for his determination and effort. That was just one of many efforts he led to provide better support and improve quality of life for Airmen."

In addition to taking care of the mission and Airmen, McGregor, as someone who has risen through both the enlisted and officer ranks, has his own piece of advice for those who would like to be promoted.

"The person who gets promoted is the person who is best prepared," he said. "Take care of your professional military education and work inside the system to make positive changes for your unit and your Airmen. When you work on lifelong learning and focus on doing your job, promotion is a byproduct of success in those areas."

McGregor also recommends looking for opportunities outside your job and to volunteer for things that can broaden your skill set. He noted that members who can write and edit well, and understand finance, contracting and construction projects are the commander's best assets.

Col. Frank Amodeo, 927th Air Refueling Wing commander at MacDill AFB, Florida, who served as McGregor's 439th Operations Group deputy commander at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts, in 2006, said McGregor gave him the chance to broaden his skill set, which has paid off for him ever since.

"From day one for me at Westover ARB, Brigadier General McGregor took me under his wing and ensured I understood the financial management of how a wing, and the Air Force for that matter, operates," Amodeo said. "As a two-time wing commander myself, I continue to pass along that





Above: Then-Col. McGregor poses with Haji, an Afghan rug merchant, in Kabul, Afghanistan, in January 2012. The two became good friends during McGregor's time there.

Below: Then Col. McGregor, commander of the 910th Airlift Wing, Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, poses with Lt. Col. JD Williams, 756th 756th Air Refueling Squadron commander and WWII veteran Fred Kublei in 2009. (Courtesy photo)



knowledge. Also, at Westover, Brigadier General McGregor knew I was knowledgeable in tactical airlift operations but had no experience at the unit level with the strategic capabilities of our global reach missions. He took me to Scott AFB (in Illinois) and the Tanker Airlift Control Center. Not only did I quickly become a better operations group deputy commander, but later, when I became the Reserve advisor to the commander of Air Mobility Command, I brought with me a well-rounded knowledge of how the Reserve supports all aspects of rapid global mobility."

As a former colleague and longtime friend, Amodeo said McGregor, as someone with many skills and capabilities, is a great representative of the Air Force Reserve.

"He has excelled as a pilot, group commander and wing commander; in deployed environments and the joint community; and on the (Headquarters Air Force) staff," he said. "This Citizen Airman has been a plug-and-play asset. That is precisely what we want in our Citizen Airmen: to have the same standards at a lower life-cycle cost. Brigadier

General McGregor is not only a role model for up-and-coming Citizen Airmen, he has molded and improved the (regular Air Force) officer and enlisted corps, too."

Being a role model and mentor to others are key aspects to McGregor's rise in the ranks, said retired Col. Lou Shogry, who served as both the operations support and airlift squadron commander when McGregor was the 439th OG commander at Westover ARB.

"After closely examining his career, one will notice a common thread of excellence and a penchant for picking the right people for the right job at the right time," Shogry said. "That recipe has resulted in many of his subordinates achieving great and successful careers in their own right. A model mentor, indeed. As I was coming into my first command, he told me, 'Get in there and act like you know what you're doing. No one else can tell, and next thing you know you actually will know what you're doing."

McGregor explained he never expected to become a general officer. But when he did, he quickly realized the star came with a whole new level of responsibility and visibility.

"The people who you've known treat you differently," he said. "They hold the rank in high regard. The rank not the person. I wasn't all of a sudden taller, better looking and funnier. Well, maybe funnier. But when you wear the rank, everything you do sends a message. And it's not about attaining the rank, it's about what you do with it."

McGregor said his fellow senior leaders need to keep their focus on making real improvement through actions and not just rhetoric.

"We all say, 'We care about our Airmen,' and, 'Airmen are the most important asset we have.' But I'll challenge anyone to show me the action that supports the words," McGregor said. "If you can't point to anything you have physically done to put those words into action, then I'm going to say you're not leading; you're not taking care of your Airmen."

Throughout his 41-year career, McGregor's most rewarding experiences have involved helping others, sometimes in small ways.

"I will have somebody walk up to me and say something like, 'Remember that time you told me?' And they will tell me what I said and say, 'It changed everything.' That's as rewarding as it gets.

"When you affected someone's life because you took the time, had a conversation and you helped them figure out how to do something -- even if it wasn't a big event in your life -- it turns out to be a big event in their life. That's a powerful lesson to keep in mind. You have to keep your energy levels high, resist having a down day, aim your frustration where it belongs and give the best of yourself every day. This you owe to those you lead."

There's An App for That!

Mobile Mission Kit reduces aircrew workload, increases reporting accuracy
By Tyler Grimes

The continued success of the Air Force Reserve depends upon developing Citizen Airmen who are prepared for the mission requirements of the future, and innovation is a major part of the future force.

The Mobile Mission Kit is a great example of the innovation of today's Citizen Airmen and their ability to lead the total force. The MMK, conceived in 2012 and championed by former chief of Air Force Reserve Command's Mobility Operations Division Col. Kevin Webb, is a mobile application that enables aircrew members to record required flight information and access related data in real time. The original concept of the MMK came from a requirement for Reservists to complete the Air Force Form 781, which is used to document flying hours and other flight information.

"MMK delivers a paperless solution to processes that were previously accomplished via pencil and paper," said Lt. Col. Mike Ballard, AFRC Mobility Operations Division branch director. "It reduces errors by enforcing AFI (Air Force Instruction)-defined business rules and creates efficiencies that shorten the mission data generation and post-mission review processes. MMK enables commanders at all levels to have access to raw, near-real-time information on their aviation units' level of effort and support to the overall mission of the Air Force."

Ballard explained that MMK was first developed to automate the Form 781 but is being expanded to include all mission-related forms involving aircraft operating procedures. The application was first introduced to the field at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, in 2015.

"The initial field testing of MMK in October 2015 was done with version 22 of the application," he said. "We are now on version 59. Each new version adds functionality and further addresses AFI-defined business rules."

Much like commercial applications, the MMK's capabilities continue to be expanded as more users adapt to the technology.

"Reservists are generally a little skeptical when they are first presented with MMK, and the first time they use it, the process is slower," said John Crowell, an AFRC mobile innovation-integration specialist. "However, after very little familiarization, Reservists quickly begin to see the benefits."

MMK's main benefits are reductions in workload and increases in reporting accuracy. By leveraging the



knowledge and experience of Citizen Airmen who are also commercial pilots and the best practices from the aviation industry, Ballard and his team are able to make continued improvements to the application as more users in the field provide feedback.

Lt. Col. Lance Avery, 700th Airlift Squadron chief pilot at Dobbins ARB, said adapting to the MMK has been challenging, but he has seen some improvements to the app.

"The program has come a long way," Avery said. "We have experienced quite a few frustrations with it, especially in the beginning with connectivity issues and losing our paperwork because of it. The connectivity has definitely improved. I haven't had as many issues as before."

Avery said he is looking forward to more improvements to the MMK such as enhanced program interfaces with more interactivity as well as further connectivity dependability.

In February 2016, Lt. Gen. James F. Jackson, who served as AFRC commander at the time, was briefed on the results of the initial field-testing of MMK. Recognizing the success at Dobbins, Jackson directed the fielding of the program at all mobility air force units throughout the command. The total rollout of the MMK is on track to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2018.

"We have fielded MMK at 10 units, and those units are using MMK as the standard platform for generating the Form 781, the master record of each flight," Ballard said.

With the implementation of the MMK underway, the next phase in development is to build a web-enabled interface that will allow information to be automatically transmitted from the MMK to the Air Force network and into other authoritative data systems. Also, Ballard has begun analyzing data collected by the MMK to quantify cost-savings of the application for the Air Force.



Staff Sgt. Chantel Benjamin, Tech. Sgt. Susan Robinson and Staff Sgt. Stephanie Lee of the 700th Airlift Squadron get hands-on experience with the mobile mission kit during its test phase at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia. (Don Peek)



Engineer's vision builds bridges - literally and figuratively

Each year, in early June, Air Force C-130s drop hundreds of U.S. military paratroopers, as well as NATO allied and partner paratroopers, over the fields of Sainte-Mère-Église in the Normandy region of France. As a part of the annual D-Day anniversary celebration, veterans of the original airborne operations from 1944 watch the re-enactments, often with tears streaming down their cheeks.

They remember the night they jumped into that dark field, behind enemy lines, 73 years ago. They remember their brothers in arms who were lost and the sacrifices so many endured to ensure freedom for France and the Allies during World War II.

As the current-day paratroopers from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Special Operations Command Europe's 75th Ranger Division, the 4th BCT, and the 25th Infantry Division land at the drop zone, some of the more spry WW II veterans stand and slowly make their way out to a modern, man-made bridge.

The bridge provides access from the drop zone, across the Le Merderet River, to the veterans' and spectators' viewing areas.

The elderly veteran paratroopers greet the younger jumpers who just re-enacted the D-Day airborne operation, then return to the distinguished visitors' tent to enjoy the annual commemorative festivities in comfort.

Air Force Reservist Maj. David Simons Jr. built that bridge across the Le Merderet River. In doing so, he not only helped build a bridge between the newest and greatest generations, but he further cemented the foundation of friendship and partnership with French, German, British and Belgium allies.

Building Blocks

Simons isn't your average individual mobilization augmentee. While he serves as a Reserve joint planner and political-military affairs officer for his assigned unit at U.S. European Command's Plans Directorate in Stuttgart, Germany, the major lives and works full time as the South Team Chief for U.S. Army Europe's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Engineering in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

His military career spans 21 years, as a prior-enlisted

communications technician and engineer assistant, and now as an officer, civil engineer and architect in the civil engineer career field. Before moving to Europe, Simons served as chief of operations for the 352nd Civil Engineer Squadron at March Air Reserve Base, California. His deployment experience includes serving in the Farah, Helmand and Nimroz provinces of Afghanistan as the Air Force Civil Engineer Center's engineer/architect officer in charge.

However, Simons said his "greatest and most challenging career accomplishment, to date," was applying his military and civilian engineering skills to envision, design, build, test and employ a heavyweight-bearing bridge, in under 10 days, in a foreign country.

"The synergy between Major Simons' military and civilian jobs in theater offers us a great chance to leverage day-to-day operations with our longer-term planning process," said Army Col. Paul Riley, chief of USEUCOM's Policy, Strategy, Partnering and Capabilities Directorate (J-5/8) Europe South and West Division. "Dave's Reserve experience and professional civilian credentials, to include his efforts with the Normandy D-Day anniversary events each year, make him a huge asset to the EUCOM J-5/8 team."

The bridge over the Le Merderet River in France not only connects the D-Day drop zone area with spectator viewing areas; it also connects members of the newest generation with those from the greatest generation.

By Col. Beth Kelley Horine

In 2014, with three years of experience planning and executing the Normandy D-Day ceremonies already under his belt, Simons realized the path the paratroopers took from their drop zone around the Le Merderet River presented many risks.

"A solution was needed to minimize those risks," he said. "The brigade commander's team, aware I was a professional engineer, approached me a month before the 2014 jump event to ask what I thought about improving access at the drop zone. I suggested building a bridge."

Simons explained the potential solutions previously considered all came with challenges. For example, utilizing U.S. Army bridging assets to move tanks and trucks across rivers proved risky because the ground around the drop zone was too soft.

"Another idea involved cordoning off a walkway across the infamous La Fière Bridge, 200 meters away, but it would require a long, single-file walk through dense, unsecured crowds for the Soldiers," he said. "So, my suggestion was the bridge."

"The notification, requirements and design were presented approximately 30 days from execution," said Army Maj. John Sivley, 72nd D-Day anniversary commemoration and airborne operations planner. By the time the planning team staffed the requirement and received the decision to support, a week had passed.

"David completed a design, built and emplaced the bridge in approximately 10 days," Silvey said. "It is always refreshing to work with professionals like David and reassuring that our military places dynamic leaders who are solution-oriented across our government agencies." Simons' bridge now allows 21st century paratroopers to cross the Le Merderet River safely and quickly. The bridge ensures a field ambulance can respond promptly to an injured jumper. In addition, it enables today's young airborne Soldiers to meet and honor the 90-plus-year-old WW II veterans who landed on the same field, that fateful night, 73 years ago.

Reinforcing for the Future

Once Simons suggested building a bridge over the Le Merderet River, he knew immediately he needed a sturdy, yet portable, structure that could be placed each year for the D-Day celebration events and then easily removed and stored.

"The thought of transporting the bridge back to Germany for use in other exercises was costly and unrealistic," he said. "This meant I had to work closely with the mayor of Sainte-Mère-Église to find a way to store the bridge long term. In the end, I was able to find funding and, due to the great relationship between the French and the U.S. military, was able to store the bridge in the city storage yard for future use."

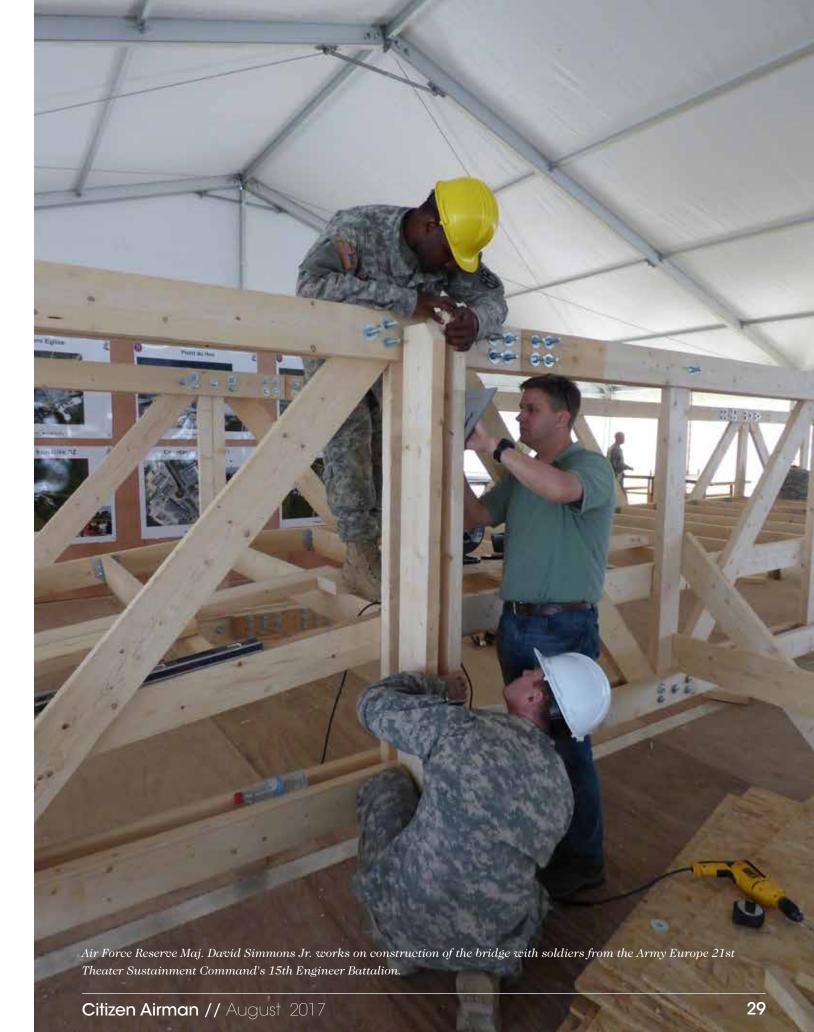
The wood truss bridge measures 6.5 feet wide by 60 feet long. It was designed and built to cross the Le Merderet River 200 meters south of the La Fière Bridge, which is 7 miles west of the town of Sainte-Mère-Église.







(Top) A line of American Paratroopers with full equipment march to their Douglas C-47 transports ready for the invasion, June 6, 1944. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images) (Middle) Parachute troops line the inside of a Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle. (Bottom) Paratroopers drop over the skies of Holland during D-Day landings June 6, 1944. (National Archives)





"The bridge had to be structurally easy enough to move so that a lightweight lifting system could access the marshy area and place the structure," Simons said. "I had to keep the materials used as light as possible."

After building the bridge, the next challenge for Simons and his team involved placing, stabilizing and testing the structure with a fully loaded field ambulance.

"While I was confident the bridge would hold, it didn't stop the jabs from the onlookers," he said. "As a structural bridge engineer by training, there was no question in my mind of failure; however, many of the Soldiers didn't believe something so light could be so strong."

As Simons climbed on the ambulance with its eightmember crew to cross the bridge for the first time, he heard bantering from the Soldiers on the riverbank: "I hope you know how to swim!"

"The best thing about this experience was the ability to mentor," Simons said. "I feel it is important to train our future replacements."

Functionality Achieved

Overall, the bridge served several functions. The planned functions included keeping jumpers out of the large crowds, allowing for maximum safety and ensuring injured jumpers were quickly evacuated across the bridge on a special field ambulance.

One additional, yet unexpected, function the bridge allowed for was the creation of a natural cordon point.

"The gendarmerie (French police) could now allow people off the road and into the field, as the cordon point established by the new bridge added to the area accessible by the audience," Simons said.

With crowd density reduced on the causeway, it meant the mounted gendarmerie had freedom of movement along the roadway, increasing safety.

"The gendarmerie could also use the bridge as an over watch, as it stood higher than the land around it," Simons said. "The head of the gendarmerie told me this provided police and medical teams freedom of movement for crowd control and safety."

"This is a great story, and none of it — from the improved force protection to the jump and POTUS ceremony — would have happened without David," said Army Lt. Col. James Shaw, U.S. Embassy France defense attaché, who worked with Simons on the project.

While Simons dealt with several U.S. and foreign agencies, it was working for the WW II veterans that inspired him the most.

"During jump day every year, many veterans in the VIP area always wanted to walk across the Le Merderet River on the La Fière Bridge, as they had on June 4, 1944," Simons said. "To the veterans, crossing the bridge was symbolic of the great sacrifices made during D-Day and the weeks after.

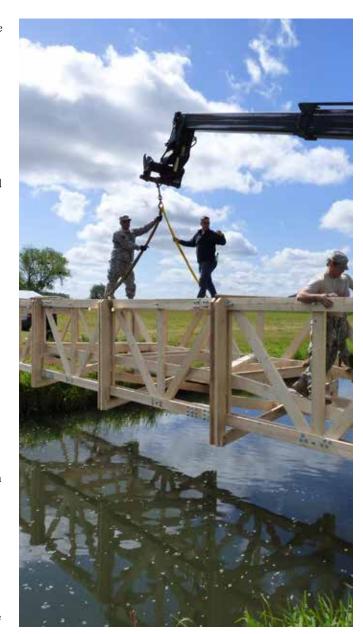
In the past, the location of the VIP area, coupled with the

men's inability to walk without aid, made it nearly impossible for most to navigate the distance on uneven ground, struggling through crowds, to stand on the La Fière Bridge again. However, the new bridge's location now allows most veterans to make their memorial walk.

"Men who lost friends fighting for control of La Fière Bridge were able to cross the Le Merderet River again on the bridge I designed," Simons said. "That, to me, was the best way I could honor their service to and sacrifice for our nation in WW II."

Each year, Simons continues to bring his family and friends to the beaches and countryside of Normandy, France, to educate the next generation through honoring the warriors of the greatest generation.

(Horine is the IMA to the Air Combat Command public affairs director at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.)



Simmons and the soldiers use a crane to place their bridge.

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